Arthur Burwell Smith, D.C., and his late wife Olive, who was his receptionist and assistant for 43 years.

Dr. Smith and the spine he bought in college—it is rumored to be to be a beheaded female spy dug up in Chicago by gravediggers—gravedigging was a profession at one time.

Dr. A.B. Smith points out the house, older than Elkhart, where he practiced for 30 of his 72 years.

I have never taken drugs of any kind. They had a newspaper story at my 90th birthday entitled, "Ninety Years and Never an Aspirin." I have had a lot of ribbing, but it's true. Still haven't taken any--I've taken a lot of vitamins.

Upon stepping inside the paneled reception area of a contemporary-looking office building one sunny afternoon, I found Dr. A.B. Smith waiting for me at his desk. A "fifty-something" patient was scheduling an appointment for the following week, as her husband sat in the adjoining waiting area. I sat down in the chair opposite Dr. Smith for a revealing look at this unusual man's professional journey.

Dr. A. B. Smith and the scales he bought as student of chiropractic (circa 1920). He still uses them because they're always accurate, but he says the rest of his original equipment is worn out.

I made the relatively short drive to Dr. Smith's office in Elkhart, Indiana, upon a former college classmate, Dr. Derrick Hendrick's nomination for our special Centennial celebration featuring chiropractic pioneers. I found Dr. Smith to be very enjoyable, most energetic, and yes, quite busy for a man of 94 years!

Dr. Smith told me the A. B. stands for Arthur Burwell, and he has always gone by A.B. because initials were easier to write. Dr. Smith's birthday is January 29, 1900—it's easy—and his dad was General Burwell—a civil war name, he says. Dr. Smith has been in practice for 72 years—since graduating in May of 1922, which he says is "a little more than average." Then again, A.B. Smith is by no means average.

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH

A. B. Smith, DC

TAC: *When did you decide to become a chiropractor?*
ABS: When I was a kid, they said I was always patching up bird's wings and crippled animals and so on, but my grandmother was quite an apothecarian—she couldn't store all of her herbs and drugs. My grand dad said he figured I was going to be a doctor, but he didn't know how I was going to be a doctor if I had to do it without drugs. As I grew older, my aversion to drugs got stronger; we began to hear about other ways of getting well, and that became my purpose. So, we were dirt poor, and I had to figure how to get through school. I became a union kid and got into that for a couple years in railroading and saw the country. I got into night school with my high school friends, so it worked out very nicely.

TAC: *Being relatively new, how did you first hear of chiropractic?*
ABS: We began to hear of other ways of getting well by word of mouth, and I investigated it.

TAC: *What chiropractic college did you attend?*
ABS: The Progressive in Chicago—it's the National College now.

TAC: *What was the Progressive's educational program like when you attended?*
ABS: We had speakers of all walks, but largely the interesting part has been physiotherapy. The manufacturers set up a booth and they would demonstrate and actually treat people, and that's been my interest, of course.

TAC: *Where did you open your first practice?*
ABS: I practiced in Chicago for a year after I was out of school. Then I opened up over in Nappanee, Indiana, a little town 18 miles south of here—I was there just two years. I've been in Elkhart for 70 years.

TAC: *Have you been on Bristol Street the whole time?*
ABS: No, most of the time I was in a house that I bought in 1951. The house was built by Dr. Beardsley ten years before he built the town [of Elkhart.] One wing has always been a doctor's office for some 100 years and it used to have a separate entrance.

Continued on next page...

Continued from previous page...

I sold it in 1981 and moved to Bristol Street because the house was getting to be too much damned work for two people. The house is still a doctor's office—it was bought by a psychiatric counselor. It was a lovely old place.

TAC: *How did the depression affect your practice?*
ABS: I survived, that's about all you can say. I was fortunate enough. I have always had a good practice but it was tough.

TAC: *How many patients do you see a day?*
ABS: I try to keep it down to 12 a day. There used to be 40 or 50 regularly, but that's when there were three of us in the city. There were two of us [chiropractors] in Elkhart, and we had to work 12-15 hours a day. But now there are 14 of them in Elkhart, and when I call it a day, I start sending them out to another one.

TAC: *Are most of your customers old-timers?*
ABS: Yes. I have three and four generations, some of them. I would say undoubtedly that the old-timers are the larger percentage of my practice, because I love the old timers and I'm going to make room for them as long as I can take care of them. I don't refuse new patients, I just don't want them. [chuckles].

TAC: *How big is your staff?*
ABS: Just my assistant, Kathy Longfield, and I.

TAC: *How long has she been with you?*
ABS: She was with me 50 years ago, and after my wife died, I remembered what a good gal she used to be. In fact, I've had a lot of girls, but she was one that was outstanding, and she was available after my wife died. She's been with me since 1988.

TAC: *But you knew her 50 years ago?*
ABS: Fifty years ago, she worked for me for 13 years. At that time, I had a staff of four girls. Now, it's just the two of us, and that's the way I want it. We don't work nights if we can possibly help it, and I work strictly by appointment. When I've had enough, I just turn on the recorder and go home. [chuckles]. I still work six days a week. Wednesday and Saturday, if I can, I get out at noon.

TAC: *What do you think is your secret to still being able to work?*
ABS: Taking your own medicine. I have never taken drugs of any kind. They had a newspaper picture and a story here at my 90th birthday, entitled, "Ninety Years and Never an Aspirin." I have had an awful lot of ribbing, but it's true. Still haven't taken any—I've taken a lot of vitamins.

TAC: *Do you exercise?*
ABS: Oh yes, I played golf avidly until my knees got to a point where I don't enjoy torturing them anymore.

TAC: *Do you know of anyone older than you who is still practicing?*
ABS: No, they tell me I'm the oldest.

TAC: *Out of the whole country?*
ABS: That's what they say. I don't know if there are any records, but definitely the oldest in Indiana.

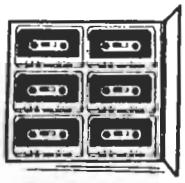
TAC: *Do you still drive?*
ABS: Oh, sure. That's it sitting out there. It's all there but the emblem. The Cadillac emblems are at a premium in this town!

TAC: *During the term of your practice, have you experienced any form of discrimination?*
ABS: Oh, yes. I went through a whole war where you didn't know whether you were going to be in jail the next day or in practice. I managed to stay out of jail, but I had an awful lot of problems. But that's worn off. I mean it just always has been a case of dollars and sense, you

Dr. Chester A . Wilk's
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM
TAPES, BOOKS, BROCHURES

Audio cassette program

11 hours of studio recordings on how to best communicate the chiropractic message with authority, impact and accuracy. Ideal for lay lectures, one on one patient communication, courtroom, media and the press. How to approach the media and get on talk shows. Become your area spokesperson and refute the medical propaganda and put facts into proper perspective. Advance yourself and chiropractic with free media exposure. The entire audio cassette program is $395.



Round Table Programs

Open to all D.C.'s with the above audiocassettes. Study the tapes and come to one or more of Chicago "Round Table" meetings conducted by Dr. Wilk. The place to ask questions, review, practice, refine, criticize, play the "devil's advocate" in a friendly, constructive and informal session. We rent a hospitality room, bring in a pot of coffee and some snacks, roll up our sleeves, gather together and acquire the "ammunition" needed to set the record straight. Bring your wives and CA's to get armed with the facts. $40 per registrant.

The "Chiropractic" Book, Basis of Chiropractic Supported by Clinical and Scientific Evidence.

The book provides solid and credible documentation to support your verbal communication. No one can honestly deny chiropractic's superiority after reading this book. Contains massive documentation. (RAND Study, Manga Report, British Study, N.Z. Report, Italian Study, Oregon, California and Utah Worker's compensation studies, Dr. Per Freitag's orthopedic ward study, Cassidy/Willis Study, Hendryson, among others). Quotes Johns Hopkins, Yale and Harvard Universities to prove its point. Use with patients, schools, libraries, insurances, lawyers, legislators, MD's, factories, the press, etc. Uses 27 pictures and illustrations. If you purchase 100 copies and are not absolutely pleased you may return them for full refund plus $10 for your trouble. Give patients books for just a little more cost than brochures. The most powerful educational tool you can find. Has a commanding cover by a leading Midwest cover designer. 1-6 books $3 ea. 7 or more $2.50 ea. 50 books for $100. 100 books for $150. A case of 360 books for only $450.

Fact Brochure

A summary of 24 hard hitting facts and statistics guaranteed to grab the attention and influence the reader. 100 brochures $40.
200 brochures $70.00. 600 or more 30¢ ea.

Chiropractic Speaks Out (an established classic)

1-5 books $2.50 each — 6 or more books $2.00 each
50 books for $50.00 — Hardcover book $12.

Other Products available. Call or write:

DR. CHESTER A. WILK
5130 W. BELMONT AVE. CHICAGO, IL 60641
(312) 725-4878

know. We have no real fight with the medical profession, except we each have our own line of practice, and if we would stay on our own side of the fence. And we're just as guilty as they are with discriminating, but that's past business. Thank heavens it's over—to an extent—it'll never be over.

TAC: *Were you ever close to being jailed because of practicing chiropractic?*
ABS: I wasn't in jail, but I was threatened and in constant battle. I'd say we won the battle with the AMA, not the medical men—it's the damned association. My best friends are medical men—I don't have any problem with them at all. Of course, I don't know what they're saying behind my back.

TAC: *So, they've never treated you any differently?*
ABS: I've never had any problem, outside way back in the beginning when it was new to them. I don't think it sits well with any profession that another one might be able to be, in some respects, more successful. And they were fighting for survival, of course—we all were. But there's room for all of us too, now, if we all just do our own thing.

TAC: *In what ways has chiropractic changed over the course of your career?*
ABS: Well, I think the advent of therapies has made it outstanding. I question whether without ultrasound and the various therapies, if we would have grown at the rate we have. We encompass everything but drugs. For a long time, I gave mineral baths along with my practice—vapor baths. I use a lot of sound wave and manipulative therapy. I think the fact that the chiropractor has encompassed all of the methods without drugs has made it expand, and has made it at the top of the healing profession.

TAC: *When you first started, was it basically manipulation only?*
ABS: Yes. I perhaps had the first diathermy in this state. Also, perhaps the first sound waves in the profession, and I studied them and approved of them.

TAC: *When do you estimate you first started using sound waves and diathermy?*
ABS: I imagine in the early '20s—probably '24. It had been a loan, and they had diathermy, of course, in hospitals for a while, and still do, but they're all defunct. I guess I introduced a lot of it in Elkhart. I know I had the first diathermy, and I suppose the first sound wave, and these all have value. Adjustments are definitely necessary to all of us, but without the therapies, it would be a slow method of healing.

TAC: *Do you recall any difficult moments in your career?*
ABS: Oh, they've all been up and down. I've never been discouraged enough to ever think of retiring or getting into anything else. I've used calligraphy as a stepping stone, but that no longer exists, so I've never done anything in my life with that. I've spent a couple years railroading and five years working nights when I was in school. So I have to stick with what I know. [chuckles].

TAC: *What do you feel are the strengths of the profession today?*
ABS: We're growing all the time. We're the second largest of the health professions.

TAC: *What do you feel are the biggest weaknesses?*
ABS: I just don't think we'll ever lose the rating as the second largest. We don't have any hopes of being the first—we don't have the organization or the money the AMA has. Also, our quarrels in the organizations. I was President of the state association in 1955 and 1956 and at that time we were very split with the Palmer Group. We each had our national association, and it's the quarrelling amongst ourselves. If we could get one large profession like the AMA, we would probably function a lot better. Those things are regrettable, but they're not insurmountable. There's nothing wrong with the other group, except they don't join us (ha ha). We have to love this profession.

TAC: *Briefly list some of your accomplishments.*
ABS: I have my share of successes, or I wouldn't be here—nothing outstanding. When I was on Beardsley, in the big house, my hours were nine to nine, and I frequently went from nine to midnight lots of nights—we were terribly understaffed then. There was just three of us in the city, and now nobody works those hours anymore. Back in those days, in the winter, half of my nights were making house calls. The medical men didn't make them either, for that matter.

TAC: *When you made house calls, were they mainly for emergency situations?*
ABS: Yes, largely for emergency and acute illnesses. Somehow we managed house calls. I suppose some of the people in the smaller towns still do—I don't know offhand.

TAC: *Did you ever have to deliver babies?*
ABS: Oh, sure. Yes, that too, is a mistake. No general practitioner should practice obstetrics. We sometimes had to wait all night to bury a baby the next day. It definitely is a mistake.

TAC: *What are some of the most memorable events that you can recall?*
ABS: I was very honored to be state president, and I enjoyed the work. After two years as state president, I think I had 20 years as district president, and finally my wife was first vice president of the national auxiliary, and it just got to the point where we weren't having any fun anymore. So I got out of all association work when David Palmer talked her out of taking the national auxiliary presidency.

TAC: *You knew David Palmer?*
ABS: Oh, yes. We were very good friends.

TAC: *Any stories to tell?*
ABS: I didn't want my wife to be national president and we were at the convention where she was going to take the office and she was ill. So I asked Dave to come up to the room and adjust her, and she just had one of those terrible migraine headaches. He said, "Olive, you are just not built right for this kind of a life. Get out of it and have fun," and he accomplished in five minutes what I had spent weeks trying to talk her out of. So, I guess that was the outsider's opinion.

He was a fantastic person. I wouldn't exactly say I knew B.J., because I don't think very many ever did know B.J. He was a super egotist, and he was above knowing, but certainly beloved—a good man.

TAC: *How long was your wife involved with your practice? Did she get involved with the patients?*
ABS: She was my receptionist for 43 years. She was largely a receptionist, but she would take over and help me with massage and all kinds of help—just like this little girl I have now [Kathy Longfield]. She's just stepped in and

Continued on next page...

A. B. Smith, DC

Continued from previous page...

helped. She worked with Olive until we got out of the big house. We had a staff of three most of the time, but I don't need it now—they'd get in my way. She doesn't get in my way.

TAC: *Did any of your patients ever pay you in anything other than cash?*
ABS: Oh, yes, way back—barter and trade, you know. I came from Virginia years ago when there was an old barter and trade theater there...I remember when you had all the commodities and so on you wanted, but you never got any cash when I was there close to half a day. The Amish practically all charged everything all summer until late summer, fall crops. They were very generous in keeping me with butter, eggs, pickles and all the produce. That was pretty much the pay back in the early days and during the depression. Patients were willing to mow your lawn and all of those things, but that didn't make us supplies.

TAC: *Have you had many Amish patients?*
ABS: Not since I left Nappanee. We have an excellent chiropractor there. There are actually two there, but one is very successful. He has all he can do. They used to drive over here—occasionally some of them do—old friends.

TAC: *Where do you envision the profession as a whole in 100 years?*
ABS: We'll go on. It'll progress. I don't always say that because we're getting too much involved with the insurance companies and they're getting dangerous. We don't know how we're going to survive this new bill—whether we're going to end up with specialized medicine and become a part of it, I don't know. I hope not.

TAC: *Do you see the profession as remaining separate and distinct?*
ABS: Well, I guess I'm hoping and scared at the same time, because this money thing has gotten too damned important. Everybody's making a good living, but they're not supposed to get too wealthy. With good investments and all that, I've been very fortunate. I suppose I have reason to take on these companies, but I wouldn't anyway.

TAC: *What's your opinion of the media's portrayal of the profession—the* Consumer Reports *article and "20/20" program?*
ABS: Well, those are all dollars and sense. You know, if you think it through, if we hadn't succeeded and proven these things, we wouldn't be here. We'll always have animosity from the top. Some of my best patients, if I had to attribute new patients or referrals, the nursing profession has been the biggest. They see both angles, and I've never had a minute's trouble with any of them.

I had been talking with Dr. Smith a little more than an hour when the phone interrupted us. Dr. Smith himself answered—Kathy had stepped out of the office—it was a patient who wanted an appointment for that afternoon. I soon thanked Dr. Smith for sharing his experiences, and went on my way—Dr. Smith was much busier than I had ever expected for a man of 94!◆